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■ EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE SERIES

■ SCHOOL WORKS

AUTHOR / AUTEUR(E) ■ Robert Pearson

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EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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SCHOOL WORKS

by: Robert Pearson, Research Officer

with the assistance of:
Louise Glegg, Research Officer
Maureen Irvine, Research Coordinator
and Veronica Schild, Research Consultant

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Evaluation and Project Research

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A Summative Evaluation of the Series
SCHOOL WORKS**

Attached is the abstract of the report **Educational Issues and Public Affairs;
A Summative Evaluation of the Series SCHOOL WORKS**. A copy of the report
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Vous trouverez ci-joint un abrégé du rapport de recherche sur **Educational Issues and
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Abstract No. 20-1990-1991

**EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
A SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE SERIES
SCHOOL WORKS**

by: Robert Pearson

with the assistance of:

Louise Glegg, Research Officer
Maureen Irvine, Research Coordinator
Veronica Schild, Research Consultant
Patricia Parsons: Project Manager

(TVOntario, Evaluation and Project Research, Report No. 20-1990-1991, 41 pages)

This report presents a summative evaluation of the first episode in the 5 part series *School Works*. The study assessed audience reactions to the program and sought to gather audience feedback about future directions for public affairs programming dealing with educational issues. The evaluation was conducted by the Evaluation and Project Research Department (EPR) at the request of the Creative Head of Public Affairs Programming in October and November of 1990.

School Works, is a prototypical series of 5, one hour programs dealing with current trends in Ontario's public schools. The program is aimed at a general, prime time, public affairs audience. Each program focuses on a particular educational issue such as student assessment or francophone education and French immersion. A host introduces an issue, which is elaborated upon through documentary footage and a panel discussion. The overall goal of the series is to show, in a positive way, the creative and innovative ways in which Ontario's educators are grappling with the problems of the 1990's. The series first went to air in April of 1990.

The program was tested with a sample of 127 general viewers and 25 educators. Viewer opinions were assessed through a questionnaire and focus groups. Roughly half of the sample was recruited from Metro Toronto and the other half from Peterborough. General viewers watched public affairs programming at least once a week or tuned into a newscast or read about news in a newspaper or newsmagazine at least 4 times per week. General viewers were roughly half male and female, tended to be between 35 and 50, tended to have children (60%), and reflected a wide range of occupations, levels of education, and ethnic backgrounds. Approximately half of the educators were administrators and the other half were classroom teachers.

TTO
MACHINE

■ **Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

Future Program Directions:

- The evaluation revealed an expressed need on the part of general viewers for programming that informs them about what is going on in the school system. Future programming with the same or similar goals as that of the *School Works* series would seem warranted.
- General viewers have clearly identifiable concerns about the educational system. There is a perception on their part that schools today are not teaching basic skills, are too permissive, and are not spending tax money wisely. These concerns might be addressed in future programming about Ontario's school system that is aimed at general viewers.

- Educators expressed a great need for programming that better informs the public about what they are doing. They strongly believe that many of the concerns expressed by parents about the educational system are unfounded. They believe that TVOntario could play a role in developing this kind of programming.
- Educators suggested that programming options outside of prime time also be explored. For example, programs intended to inform the public about Ontario's schools could be used during parent/teacher meetings or sent home with parents who express interest.
- Some educators suggested that the new Daytime Project might be a vehicle for programming intended to bridge the communication gap between educators and the general public.

Viewer Preferences About Program Format

- Viewers appear to want to see for themselves what is going on in the classroom. Documentary footage shot in the classroom appears to be a particularly effective way of creating this sense of first hand knowledge.
- Viewers appear to want a balanced presentation. They want to know about what is working in our schools and why. They also want to know about what isn't working and why.

Viewer Reactions To School Works

- Viewers were very enthusiastic about the intent of *School Works* and were thrilled to have a glimpse into a modern classroom.
- While educators expressed confusion over the intended audience for the program most general viewers sensed the program was aimed at people like them.
- Viewers, generally, were left with a positive attitude about the practices portrayed in the program.
- While most viewers described the goal of the program as having something to do with new teaching methods - many admitted they were initially confused about what the program was about. A better introduction and conclusion seemed to be needed.
- The documentary footage was enthusiastically received. Viewers want to get a sense they are seeing things first hand.
- While an attempt was made to tie the panel discussion back to the documentary footage, viewers felt the panel discussion, at times, drifted away from central theme of the program. Perhaps the panel discussion needed to be more tightly focused and better controlled.
- Viewers noted that basic information about the educational practices portrayed in the program was missing. It was unclear how widespread the practices actually were and how and why these practices were developed. It was also unclear to viewers how successful the practices were.
- Viewers, generally, perceived the program to be too one sided. They wanted to hear opposing opinions about the value of the educational practices shown in the program.
- Viewers, generally, felt the program was too long.

Abrégé n° 20-1990-1991

**EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
A SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE SERIES
*SCHOOL WORKS***

par: Robert Pearson

avec la collaboration:

Louise Glegg, agent de recherche
Maureen Irvine, coordinatrice de recherche
Veronica Schild, conseillère de recherche
Patricia Parsons: chef de project

(TVOntario, Service de recherche et d'évaluation, rapport n° 20-1990-1991, 41 pages)

Ce rapport présente les résultats d'une évaluation sommative du premier épisode de la série de cinq émissions intitulée *School Works*. Cette étude a évalué les réactions des participants face à l'émission et a tenté de rassembler les points de vue des participants quant aux directions futures des émissions d'affaires publiques portant sur les questions d'éducation. L'évaluation a été menée en octobre et novembre 1990 par le Service de recherche et d'évaluation à la demande du chef de création, Affaires publiques.

School Works est une série modèle de cinq émissions d'une heure consacrée aux tendances actuelles dans les écoles publiques de l'Ontario. Cette série s'adresse au grand public qui regarde des émissions d'affaires publiques pendant les heures de grande écoute. Chaque émission se penche sur un thème particulier du domaine de l'éducation, tel que l'évaluation des élèves, l'éducation des francophones ou les programmes d'immersion. Un animateur introduit le sujet qui est alors étudié plus en détail par le biais de piétage documentaire et d'une tribune (discussion entre experts). L'objectif global de la série est de démontrer de façon positive, les méthodes d'enseignement créatives et innovatrices qu'utilisent les éducateurs pour s'attaquer aux problèmes des années 1990. La série a été diffusée pour la première fois en avril 1990.

L'échantillon utilisé pour l'évaluation de l'émission était formé de 127 membres du grand public et de 25 éducateurs et éducatrices. Un questionnaire et des groupes de discussion ont servi de véhicules pour recueillir les points de vue des participants. À peu près la moitié des participants provenaient du grand Toronto alors que l'autre moitié avait été recrutée à Peterborough. Le groupe grand public regardait des émissions d'affaires publiques au moins une fois par semaine, suivait le journal télévisé ou lisait un journal ou une revue d'information au moins quatre fois par semaine. Ce groupe était composé d'un nombre relativement égal d'hommes et de femmes de 35 à 50 ans, qui avaient le plus souvent des enfants (60 %) et il représentait une grande variété de professions, de niveaux d'éducation et d'origines ethniques. Quant au groupe d'éducateurs, il était formé de 50 % d'administrateurs et 50 % d'enseignants.

Sommaire des résultats et recommandations

Orientations futures de la série

- L'évaluation a montré que les membres du groupe grand public voulaient avoir accès à des émissions qui les tiendraient au courant de ce qui se passe dans le système scolaire. Des émissions ayant les mêmes buts ou des buts similaires à ceux de la série *School Works* pourraient être justifiées.

TVO
L'ÉCHÉLON

- Les membres du grand public ont des inquiétudes manifestes à propos du système d'éducation. Ils ont la nette impression que les écoles d'aujourd'hui n'enseignent pas les notions de base, sont trop tolérantes et ne dépensent pas l'argent des contribuables de façon appropriée. Toute programmation future portant sur le système scolaire en Ontario et conçue pour les téléspectateurs grand public pourra aborder ces problèmes.
- Les éducateurs ont exprimé le besoin de voir des émissions qui informeraient mieux le public sur ce qu'ils font. Ils estiment qu'une grande part des inquiétudes ressenties par les parents quant au système d'éducation ne sont pas justifiées. Ils pensent que TVOntario pourrait jouer un rôle dans l'élaboration de ce genre d'émissions.
- Les éducateurs aimeraient aussi que nous envisagions de diffuser ou d'utiliser ce même genre d'émissions en dehors des heures de grande écoute. Par exemple, les émissions voulant informer le public sur les écoles de l'Ontario pourraient être utilisées lors des réunions parents-enseignants ou prêtées aux parents intéressés.
- Certains éducateurs ont suggéré que le Projet Daytime pourrait servir de véhicule pour les émissions visant à combler le manque de communications entre les éducateurs et le grand public.

Préférence des participants pour le format

- Les téléspectateurs semblent vouloir voir eux-mêmes ce qui se passe dans les salles de classe. Le piétage documentaire filmé dans la salle de classe semble être une façon efficace d'obtenir de l'information de première main.
- Les téléspectateurs semblent vouloir une présentation équilibrée. Ils veulent savoir ce qui fonctionne et ce qui ne fonctionne pas dans la salle de classe et pourquoi.

Réactions des téléspectateurs à la série *School Works*

- L'objectif de la série *School Works* a suscité beaucoup d'enthousiasme auprès des téléspectateurs. Ils étaient ravis à l'idée d'avoir un aperçu d'une salle de classe moderne.
- Alors que les éducateurs ont ressenti une certaine confusion quant à l'auditoire ciblé pour cette émission, la plupart des membres du grand public ont senti que l'émission avait été conçue pour des personnes comme eux.
- Après le visionnement, les téléspectateurs en général ont eu une attitude positive quant aux méthodes d'enseignement démontrées dans cette émission.
- Bien que la plupart des téléspectateurs aient perçu l'objectif de l'émission comme ayant trait en quelque sorte aux nouvelles méthodes d'enseignement, un certain nombre ont admis avoir été d'abord confus sur le sujet traité dans l'émission. Une meilleure introduction et conclusion sembleraient souhaitables.
- Le piétage documentaire a été bien reçu. Les téléspectateurs veulent avoir l'impression qu'ils voient des choses de première main.
- Bien que l'on ait tenté d'associer la tribune au piétage documentaire, les téléspectateurs ont trouvé qu'à certains moments, la tribune s'éloignait quelque peu du thème central de l'émission; peut être que la tribune devrait être plus centrée et mieux contrôlée.
- Les téléspectateurs en général ont remarqué que certains renseignements de base portant sur les méthodes d'enseignement ne figuraient pas dans l'émission. Ils ne connaissaient ni l'étendue de ces méthodes, ni leur efficacité.

- Les téléspectateurs en général ont trouvé l'émission trop unilatérale. Ils voulaient également connaître les opinions contraires sur la valeur des méthodes d'enseignement démontrées au cours de l'émission.
- Les téléspectateurs en général ont trouvé l'émission trop longue.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The current state and future of Ontario's educational system has been identified as an important theme for programming within the public affairs sector. *School Works* is a prototypical series of 5, one hour programs dealing with current trends in Ontario's public schools. The program is aimed at a general, prime time, public affairs audience. Each program focuses on a particular educational issue such as student assessment or francophone education and French immersion. A host introduces an issue, which is elaborated upon through documentary footage and interviews, and through a panel discussion. The overall goal of the series is to show, in a positive way, the creative and innovative ways in which Ontario's educators are grappling with the problems of the 1990's. The series first went to air in April of 1990 and was re-aired in August of 1990.

B. Purpose of Evaluation

The evaluation had two goals. The first was to assess audience reactions to the series *School Works*. The second was to use the *School Works* evaluation as a means of gathering general audience feedback about public affairs programming dealing with educational issues. Information gathered from this part of the evaluation helped identify future programming directions in the public affairs sector by identifying educational issues that are of interest to a general television audience and identifying suitable television formats for such programs.

C. Primary Evaluation Questions

Primary evaluation questions were divided into three categories: questions related to the content of *School Works*; questions related to the format of *School Works*; and questions related to the identification of future programming directions.

1. Content of *School Works*

- What educational issues does the audience feel are raised in the program?
- What does the audience perceive to be the appropriate target audience for the program?
- How does the program make the audience feel about the present state of Ontario's educational system?

2. Format of *School Works*

- What is the audience's reaction to the program's host?
- What is the audience's reaction to the individual program elements (documentary footage and panel discussion)?

- How well does the audience think these program elements work together?
- What is the audience's reaction to the program's length and pace?

3. Future Program Directions

- What educational issues are of current concern among audience members?
- What television formats do audience members prefer for public affairs programming dealing with educational issues?
- What implications do these findings have with regards to the format of public affairs programs in general?

D. Evaluation Procedures

1. Sample

The primary evaluation audience for the study was potential viewers of TVO's public affairs programming. This evaluation audience represented the established target audience for the series. A second evaluation audience comprised of teachers and educational administrators was also included. It was felt that this group might offer knowledgeable insights about the accuracy and saliency of the material presented. In addition, they might be a useful source of topics for future public affairs programs dealing with Ontario's educational system.

Subjects were drawn from two locations, one a large urban centre (Metro Toronto) and another a smaller regional centre (Peterborough). Seventy-one subjects were recruited from Peterborough and 61 from Toronto.

Two groups of subjects were recruited from each location. The first group reflected a general, prime time, TVO audience. At the request of the Creative Head of Public Affairs, however, the sample was broadened to include subjects who were younger, more ethnically diverse, and more working class. Fifty general viewers were recruited from Toronto and 57 from Peterborough. The sampling characteristics established for the first group were as follows:

- some interest in current affairs (i.e., someone who watches television news, listens to radio news, or reads a daily newspaper at least 4 times per week OR someone who watches a public affairs program on television at least once per month).
- 1/4 of subjects between the ages of 25 and 35
- 3/4 of subjects between the ages of 36 and 55
- equal numbers of males and females
- 1/4 of subjects must be hourly wage earners
- for one of the locations, 1/4 of subjects must be either a visible minority or have a mother tongue other than English

The second group was made up of teachers and educational administrators - individuals with a special expertise in the educational system. Fourteen educators were recruited from Peterborough and 11 from Toronto.

2. Method

Each group was tested separately. Subjects were asked to view the first program in the series, "Class Picture," and then given a questionnaire that assessed their reactions. The questionnaire contained both open and fixed response items. The fixed responses took the form of five point semantic differential items. Typically, subjects were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement. A "1" indicated that they strongly agreed with a particular statement while a "5" indicated they strongly disagreed. Subjects were also asked to rate elements of the program on a scale ranging from "very effective" to "not at all effective" or on a scale ranging from "high" to "low" and asked to rate topics on a scale ranging from "very interested" to "not at all interested." In some cases a four point scale was used to force respondents into stating an opinion. Upon completion of the questionnaire, subjects participated in focus group sessions. The focus groups allowed for a more in depth and less structured assessment of subjects' reactions. Each focus group contained approximately 10 subjects. For general viewers, focus groups were divided according to age. For educators, teachers and administrators were separated.

II. RESULTS

A. Description of Sample

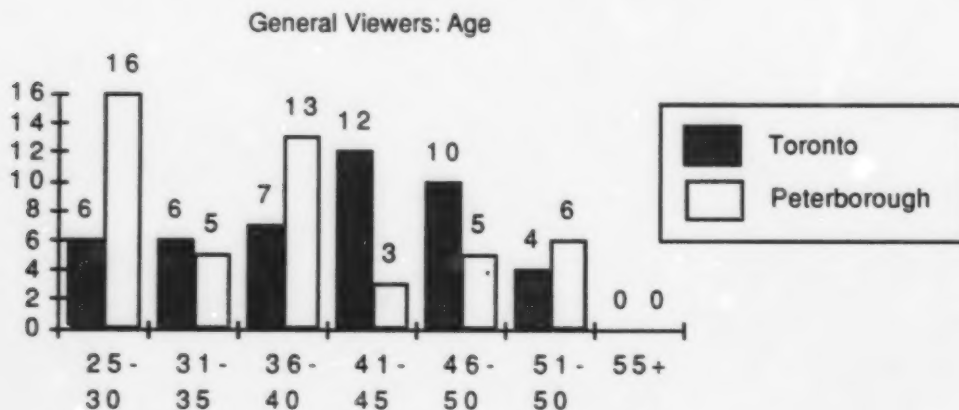
One hundred and thirty two subjects took part in the study. Of these, 127 were general viewers. Fifty-seven were from Peterborough and 50 were from Toronto. The remaining 25 subjects were educators. Fourteen were from Peterborough and 11 were from Toronto. Twelve of the educators were administrators and 13 were classroom teachers. Please note that due to missing values the totals cited in the following sections may not equal the totals given above.

1. General Viewers

a) Age

Subjects in the Toronto sample tended to be older than subjects in the Peterborough sample. Most subjects in the Toronto sample were between 41 and 45 (12 [25%]) and between 46 and 50 (10 [20%]) while most subjects in the Peterborough sample were between 25 and 30 (16 [28%]) and between 36 and 40 (13 [23%]) (see Figure 1).

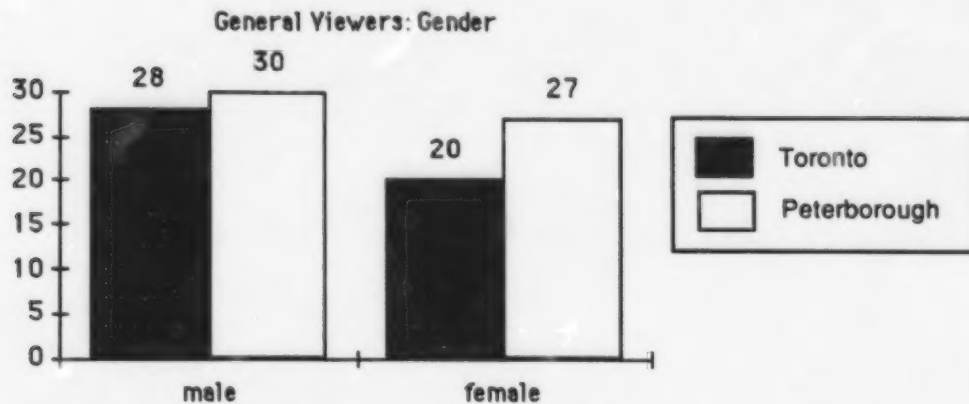
Figure 1: General viewers' age level



b) Gender

Both samples were roughly equal in terms of numbers of males and females (Toronto: 20 [42%] female, 28 [58%] male; Peterborough: 27 [47%] female, 30 [53%] male) (see Figure 2).

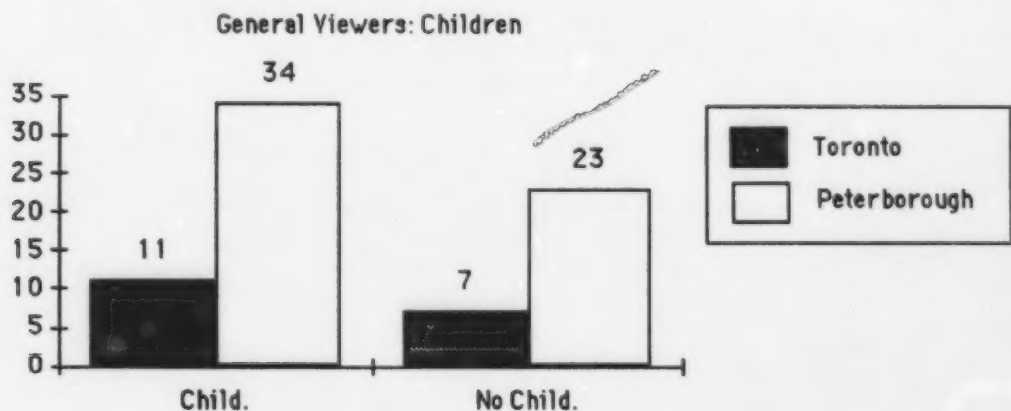
Figure 2: Gender of general viewers



c) Children

Both groups were the same in terms of the proportion who had children (Toronto: 11 [61%]; Peterborough: 34 [60%]) and who did not have children (Toronto: 7 [39%]; Peterborough: 23 [40%]) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: General viewers having children or not (child.=children; No Child.=no children)

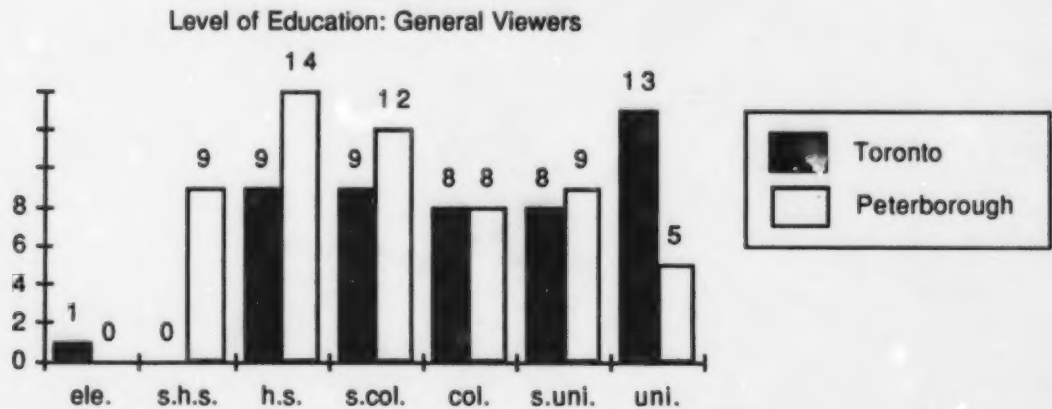


d) Education

Subjects in the Toronto sample tended to be more highly educated. Most Toronto subjects had completed university (13 [27%]), had some college (9 [19%]), or had finished high school (9 [19%]). Most Peterborough subjects had completed high school (14 [25%]), completed some college (12 [21%]),

completed some high school (9 [16%]), and completed some university (9 [16%]) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: General viewers' level of education (ele.=elementary; s.h.s.=some high school; h.s.=high school; s. col.=some college; col.=college; s. uni.= some university; uni.=university)



e) Occupation

Subjects in the Toronto sample were more likely to be professionals and white collar workers, while subjects in the Peterborough sample were more likely to be trade and blue collar workers. Most subjects in the Toronto sample were white collar workers (10 [21%]), professionals (6 [13%]), and trade and blue collar workers (6 [13%]). Most subjects in the Peterborough sample were trade and blue collar workers (12 [21%]), semi professionals (8 [14%]), and white collar workers (8 [14%]).

f) Income

Toronto subjects tended to have higher household incomes than Peterborough subjects. Most Toronto subjects have yearly household incomes between 31K and 40K per year (13 [27%]) and between 41K and 50K (10 [21%]). Most Peterborough subjects have yearly household incomes under 20K (13 [26%]) and between 31K and 40K (13 [26%]).

g) Television Viewing (TVO)

Both samples tended to watch between 1 and 3 hours of TVO per week (47 [49%]) and between 3 and 5 hours per week (20 [14%]).

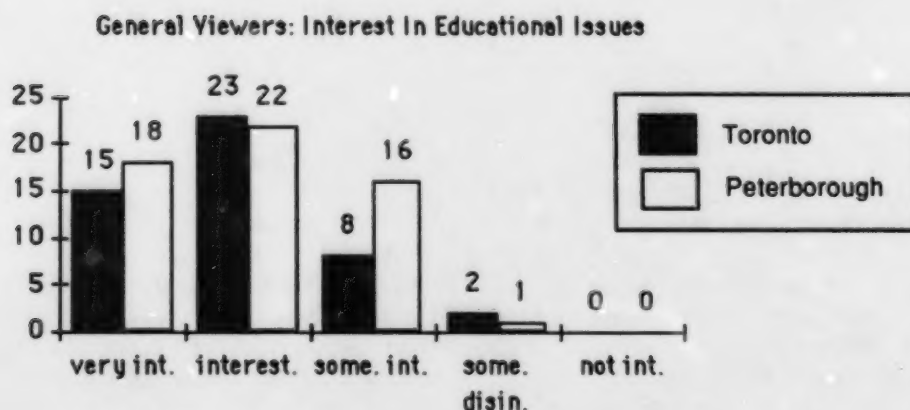
h) Overall Television Viewing Habits

Toronto subjects tended to watch more television than Peterborough subjects. Most Toronto subjects watched between 8 and 12 hours per week (16 [33%]), over 16 hours per week (11 [23%]), and between 12 and 16 hours per week (10 [21%]). Both general viewers in Toronto and Peterborough tended to watch the same number of public affairs programs a week. Most general viewers said they watched 2 to 4 public affairs programs per week (Toronto: 17 [35%]; Peterborough: 27 [47%]), and 5 to 7 public affairs programs per week (Toronto: 13 [27%]; Peterborough: 12 [21%]).

i) Interest in Educational Issues

Both groups tended to indicate they were interested (Toronto: 23 [48%]; Peterborough: 22 [39%]), and very interested (Toronto: 15 [31%]; Peterborough: 18 [32%]) in educational issues (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: General viewers' interest in educational issues (very int.=very interested; interest.=interested; some int.=some interest; some disin.=some disinterest; not int.=not interested)



2. Educators

Most educators were between 41 and 45 (7 [30%]) and 46 and 50 (5 [22%]) and most had between 15 and 20 years of teaching/administrative experience (5 [25%]) and under 25 years of teaching/administrative experience (6 [30%]). Educators were about half male (11 [48%]) and half female (12 [52%]). Most educators watched less than one hour of TVO per week (11 [48%]) and between 1 and 3 hours per week (8 [35%]). Overall, they tended to watch between 4 and 8 hours of television (11 [48%]) and less than 4 hours of television (8 [35%]) each week. Educators tended to watch 2 to 4 public affairs programs each week (10 [43%]) and at least one public affairs show per week (8 [35%]).

B. Audience Reactions to the Program

1. Introduction

Audience reactions are reported according to the following categories: general impressions of the program (specific things viewers liked and disliked), program clarity (how easily did viewers understand and follow the program), program viewpoint (did viewers detect a particular slant to the information presented and to whom did viewers feel the program was aimed), program pace and length, program host, panel discussion, and documentary footage. Numerical data, unless otherwise indicated, is in the form of mean scores for a particular questionnaire item. For example, a score of 2.1 for the statement, "I found the program personally valuable" means that the average response of subjects was 2.1 on a scale where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree.

Key questionnaire results are displayed graphically in the body of the report; however, for a complete set of questionnaire results, please consult the appendix on page 25.

Since no meaningful differences existed between the Peterborough and Toronto samples on the questionnaire items data from each of these groups has been combined. Data is identified as follows:

E - Educators
GV - General Viewers

2. General Impressions

Overall, both general viewers and educators stated strong support for the goal of the program. Both audiences expressed a need for programming that narrowed what they saw as an information gap between educators and the general public. However, viewers' reactions to the program's format was lukewarm. Focus group and open-ended questionnaire responses suggested that many general viewers and educators were concerned about the program's structure, length and viewpoint. Some viewers commented that the program seemed too long and difficult to follow. Some viewers felt the program was overly positive in its presentation of educational practices.

When asked how effective the program was general viewers and educators indicated that they felt the program was neither effective nor ineffective (4 point scale) (GV 2.2/E 2.3) (see Figure 6). When asked to respond to the statement, "I found the information presented in the program to be personally valuable," general viewers agreed slightly with the statement (GV 2.3) while educators where slightly less agreeable (E 2.7).

Figure 6: Overall program effectiveness (VE=very effective, NE=not at all effective)



When asked to state positive aspects of the program, viewers tended to cite the opportunity to see what was going on in the classroom. When asked to state negative aspects of the program, viewers tended to note the program's lack of a clear objective(s), excessive length, and overly positive viewpoint.

Some Positive Comments:

"I thought the program was interesting especially learning about the changes that have occurred in the school system since I attended school."

"The program helps to bring viewers (many parents) closer to teachers and students. The practical classroom activities shown were informative. It was reassuring to see children and school administrators feel free to express their personal opinions."

"It was enjoyable to see the different educational techniques used in the schools and to see how different things are now from my own childhood."

"I liked the program because it informed viewers about the new educational curriculum in school systems using the students' point of view as well."

Some Negative Comments:

"Too long. Too subjective. No comparisons to other schools or dissenting opinions. Where are the parents?"

"Tried to deal with too many issues at once, rather than focusing on one or two."

"Failure to clearly state the purpose of the program or goals of the program."

"Too long. Jumping from topic to topic. I was unable to hear commentary over kids voices."

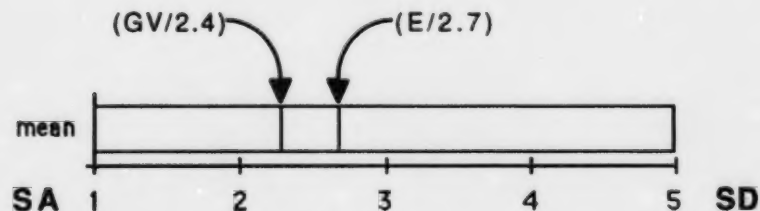
"The goal was not clear. It took a long time to make a point. While the topics were interesting it was a slow moving program. Too many issues, curriculum, funding, pedagogy. Very elongated questioning. The issue of curriculum was never really tied to the [documentary footage]."

3. Clarity

Viewers were asked a series of questions about how easy the program was to follow. Overall, questionnaire items dealing with program clarity indicated that general viewers found the program relatively easy to follow and were able to identify the goal of the program. Educators tended to find the program less easy to follow and found it more difficult to identify the program's goal. Many viewers were critical of the program's structure during the focus group sessions. Viewers voiced strong criticisms about the program's introduction. Many viewers indicated that it took them a while to figure out what the program was about. Viewers also noted a lack of integration between the panel discussions and documentary footage. They felt that issues were raised during the panel discussion that did not clearly relate back to events depicted in the documentary sections.

When asked to respond to the statement, "I found the program easy to follow," general viewers and educators agreed somewhat (GV 2.4 /E 2.7) (see Figure 7). General viewers disagreed with the statement, "material presented in the program was too complex," (GV 3.9) while educators disagreed somewhat with the statement (E 3.5). Finally, general viewers tended to agree with the statement, "the program was well organized," (GV 2.3) while educators tended to neither agree nor disagree with the statement (E 3.1).

Figure 7: Average responses to statement: "I found the program easy to follow" (SA=strongly agree, SD=strongly disagree)



Selected Comments:

"The program needed an introduction explaining the purpose of the program to capture the interest of viewers."

"I didn't know what was going on at first. To me, the kids were just playing."

"If the goals of the program were stated clearly at the beginning of each program [the show] would be of more interest to a public affairs audience."

"It was confusing. It jumped from one thing to another. It didn't flow very well. Something was missing."

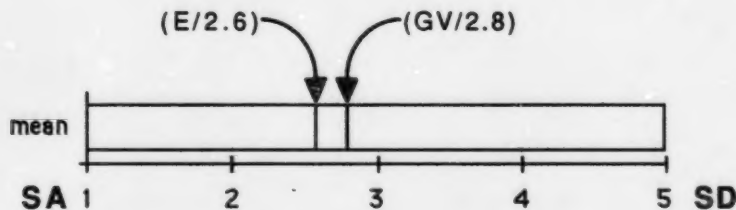
"There was little relationship to what the panel was discussing and what was actually occurring in the on location film segments of the program."

4. Viewpoint

Viewers were asked to respond to a series of statements that described the program's point of view. These statements described the program's intended audience, how the program made viewers feel about Ontario's educational system, and the extent to which viewers felt the program accurately reflected what was going on in most schools in Ontario.

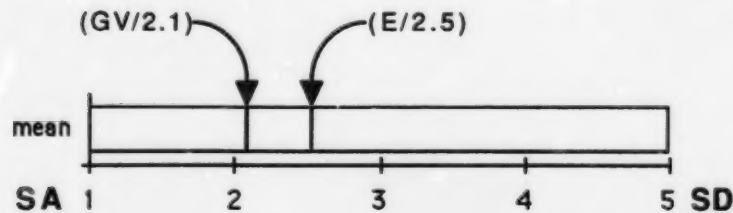
When asked to respond to the statement, "I felt the program was aimed at a specialized audience," general viewers tended to neither agree nor disagree (GV 2.8), while educators tended to agree slightly (E 2.6) (see Figure 8). There was confusion expressed by some general viewers and educators during the focus group sessions as to the intended audience.

Figure 8: Average responses to statement: "I felt the program was aimed at a specialized audience" (SA=strongly agree, SD=strongly disagree)



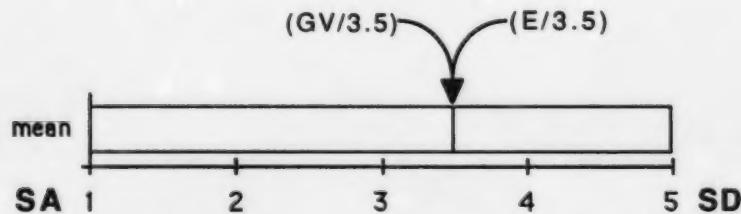
Viewers tended to suggest that the program presented a positive picture of Ontario's educational system. General viewers tended to agree with the statement, "After having watched the program, I feel encouraged about what's going on in our schools", (GV 2.1) while educators tended to agree slightly (E 2.5) (see Figure 9). Many viewers, however, expressed concern during focus group sessions that the program tended to talk only about how successful the innovations were rather than also discussing some of their failings.

Figure 9: Average responses to statement: "After having watched the program, I feel encouraged by what's going on in our schools" (SA=strongly agree, SD=strongly disagree)



Viewers tended to slightly disagree with the statement, "the program accurately reflects what is going on in most schools" (GV 3.5/E 3.5) (see Figure 10). Many general viewers and educators noted that they were uncertain from the information presented in the program as to how widespread the practices portrayed actually were. Other viewers, particularly educators, expressed concern that the program left the impression that these innovations were going on in most schools when, in fact, they were not.

Figure 10: Average responses to statement: "the program accurately reflects what is going on in most schools" (SA=strongly agree, SD=strongly disagree)



Selected Comments:

"The program wasn't really geared to me as a parent, there was a lack of a parent's insights about what is going on."

"I found it far too academic and geared to a very limited group."

"It seems that this is a promotional tape trying to sell us something."

"I was confused. What issues were raised in this program? The innovations in education discussed in the program were not compared to any other teaching/learning methods. The program did not explore the successes or failures of various teaching/methods."

"In reality, these schools do not represent the norm in Ontario's educational system."

5. Program Pace and Length

General viewers tended to neither agree nor disagree with the statement, "the program moved too slowly," (GV 3.0) while educators tended to agree slightly (E 2.6). The program's pace was mentioned often by viewers during the focus group sessions. Viewers tended to feel the program was too long for the material presented and that the program moved too slowly.

Selected Comments:

"The program was too long"

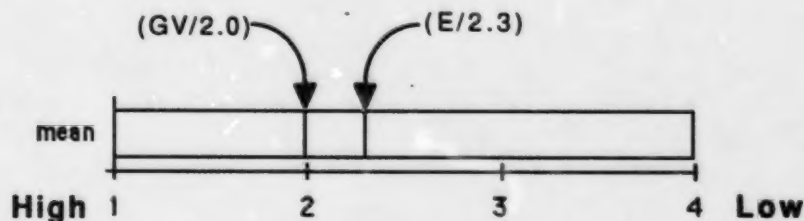
"If I were a viewer sitting at home, I would have turned off the program within the first five minutes because the pace was too slow and would not keep my interest. The whole show could have been condensed into a half-hour program."

6. Host

Most viewers found the host to be competent, knowledgeable, and engaging. Educators tended to be less enthusiastic towards the host than general viewers.

Overall, viewers rated the performance of the host as moderately high (GV 2.0/ E 2.3) (4 point scale) (see Figure 11). Viewers tended to agree or agree slightly with statements like: "the host led the panel discussion effectively" (GV 2.1/E 2.3); "the host kept the panel discussion focused on the issues at hand" (GV 2.1/E 2.4); "the questions posed by the host elicited meaningful responses" (GV 1.9/E 2.4); "the host appeared to be knowledgeable about the issues presented" (GV 1.9/E 2.5). Educators neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, "the host clearly introduced the issue(s) dealt with in the program," while general viewers slightly agreed (GV 2.4/ E 3.0).

Figure 11: Overall rating of program's host



Selected Comments:

"Animated voice, sympathetic. Good grasp of background information. Facilitated discussion well."

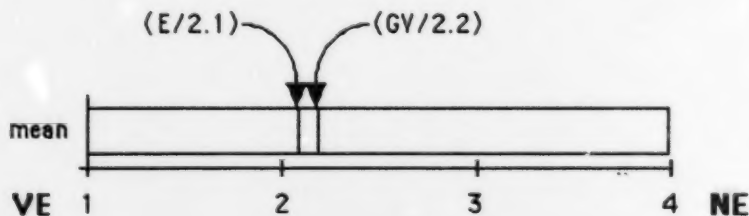
"She had charisma and kept the conversation moving. She presented herself as informed and interested."

7. Panel Discussions

Viewers' reactions to the panel discussions were lukewarm. Many general viewers and educators noted that the panel discussions seemed too long, touched on too many disparate topics, and often failed to clearly relate to other material presented in the program. Viewers said that the panel guests appeared to be too agreeable - these viewers expressed a desire for a more confrontational style of panel discussion. Most viewers found the panel guests to be appropriate and knowledgeable but many viewers also said they wanted to see a parent as one of the panelists. These viewers felt the particular concerns of parents were not voiced by the panel members. When asked, many viewers said they noticed the camera work during these segments of the program. Of these viewers, some indicated they found the camera work distracting while others said it did not distract them.

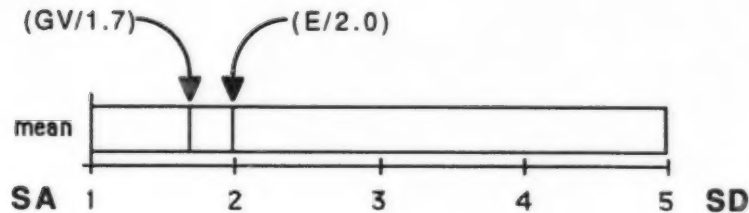
Overall, viewers rated the panel discussions as somewhat effective (GV 2.2/E 2.1) (4 point scale) (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Overall rating of panel discussion segments (VE=very effective, NE=not at all effective)



Viewers tended to agree and strongly agree with statements like, "the panel guests appeared to be knowledgeable about the issues discussed" (GV 1.7/E 2.0) (see Figure 13) and, "it was effective to have the panel discussion focus on real events in schools across the province" (GV 1.7/E 2.1).

Figure 13: Average response to statement: "The panel guests appeared to be knowledgeable about the issues discussed" (SA=strongly agree, SD=strongly disagree)



Viewers tended to agree or agree slightly with statements like: "I understood how each guest was connected with the issue under discussion" (GV 2.5/E 2.6); "the identity of the panel guests was clearly communicated" (GV 2.3/E 2.3); "I understood how each guest was connected with the issue under discussion" (GV 2.5/E 2.6).

Viewers tended to disagree with statements like: "the questions asked by the host during the panel discussion were difficult to understand (GV 3.9/E 3.5) and, "the panel discussions did not fit in well with the rest of the program (GV 3.8/E 3.4).

General viewers tended to agree with the statement, "the panel discussion helped to clarify the issues that were raised" (GV 2.2) while educators tended to neither agree nor disagree (E 3.0).

Selected Comments:

"The panel was too academic. There was no input from members of the community, from parents, from religious, people for example."

"They were all nice, all positive. It would have been nice to have someone...who didn't like the new style of teaching, just to see what would have happened. It might have put a little life in the panel."

"Toward the end they [the panelists] were starting to go in circles without saying too much."

"Lengthy in that too many questions were asked in one sitting. The speakers added a great deal of credibility to the discussion."

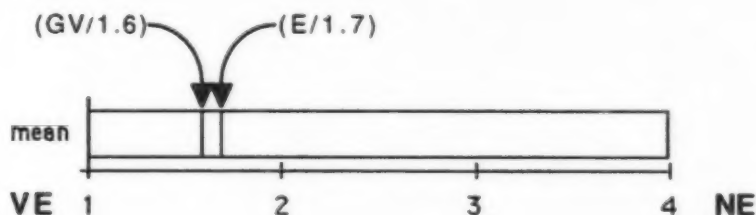
"The panel was well informed and very enthusiastic."

8. Documentary Footage

General viewers and educators were enthusiastic about the program's heavy use of documentary footage. Many, in fact, noted that this material was the strongest part of the program. Viewers commented repeatedly how the documentary footage gave them such a vivid sense of what is going on in classrooms across the province.

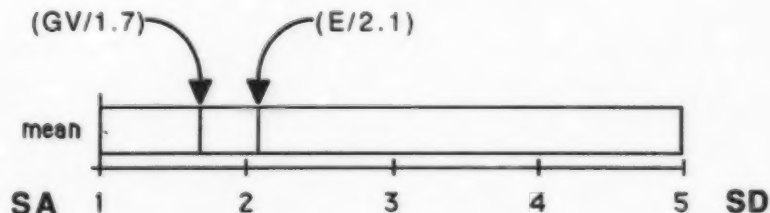
Overall, viewers found the documentary footage very effective (GV 1.6/E 1.7) (4 point scale) (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Average response to question: "How effective was the 'on location' material" (VE=very effective, NE=not at all effective)



Viewers also tended to agree or strongly agree with statements like: "the on location material fitted in well with the rest of the program" (GV 1.8/E 2.0); "the on location material heightened my interest in the program" (GV 1.6/E 1.8); "the on location material helped me relate better to the issues presented in the program" (GV 1.7/E 2.1) (see Figure 15); and "the on location material helped me understand the issues presented in the program" (GV 1.8/E 2.3).

Figure 15: Average response to statement: "The 'on location' material helped me relate better to the issues presented in the program" (SA=strongly agree, SD=strongly disagree)



Selected Comments:

"I enjoyed watching the children in the 'on location' film footage because viewers had the opportunity to see and learn for themselves what is happening in the schools - instead of having someone tell viewers what is occurring."

"I thoroughly enjoyed the 'on location' footage"

"The main strength of the program was being able to have the camera in the classroom, going into classrooms and seeing the kids in action."

C. The Viewer and Educational Issues

Viewers repeatedly mentioned several key concerns about Ontario's educational system. General viewers were concerned that students today lack basic skills in reading, spelling, and simple arithmetic. Again and again, viewers cited examples they had heard of high school graduates who could not read and write and who required a calculator to carry out the simplest of calculations. General viewers also expressed concern about the high cost of education and whether they were getting the best value for their tax dollars. A perceived lack of student discipline was another often mentioned concern of general viewers.

General viewers often mentioned that they didn't have a good enough understanding of what was going on in today's classrooms. They felt this lack of knowledge hindered their ability to communicate intelligently with teachers and educational administrators. Not surprisingly, educators were more positive about the state of Ontario's educational system, but interestingly, they also expressed concern about the lack of communication between them and the general public. Educators believed that many of the concerns voiced by the general public were unfounded. They were eager to "set the record straight." Both general viewers and educators indicated they felt that TVO had an important role in closing the information gap between them. One superintendent even suggested that his school board might be willing to provide financial support to produce programs that would address this problem.

General viewers tended to neither agree nor disagree with the statement, "students are educated as well as they used to be (GV 3.1) while educators tended to agree with the statement (E 2.1). General viewers and educators tended to agree slightly with the statement, "the school system is sensitive to the concerns of parents (GV 2.7/E 2.4). General viewers tended to agree slightly with the statement, "the school system is not spending our tax money wisely" (GV 3.9), while educators tended to disagree (E 3.8). General viewers tended to neither agree nor disagree with the statement, "the right things are not being taught in school" (GV 3.0), while educators tended to disagree (E 4.0).

General viewers also tended to indicate that they were interested to very interested in programs dealing with social problems (AIDS, drug abuse, gang violence) facing students (GV 1.8), what students should be taught in school (GV 1.5) (see Figure 16), the mission and direction of schools in the future (GV 1.8) (see Figure 17), new and

innovative teaching methods (GV 2.0) (see Figure 18), and new approaches to student evaluation (GV 1.9).

Figure 16: Average level of interest expressed in topic: "what are students being taught in school" (VI=very interested, NI=not at all interested)

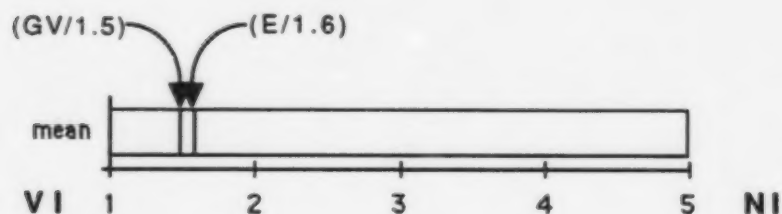


Figure 17: Average level of interest expressed in topic: "what is the mission and direction of schools in the future" (VI=very interested, NI=not at all interested)

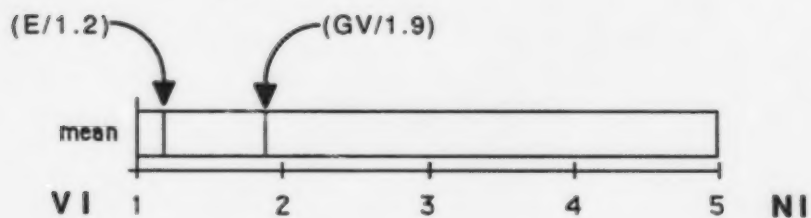
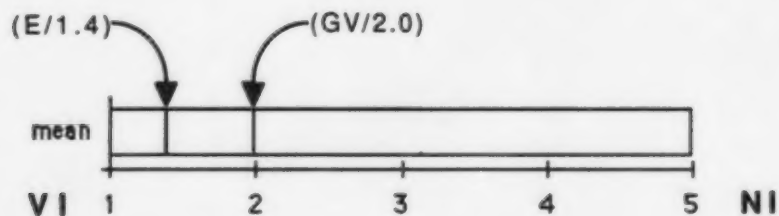


Figure 18: Average interest expressed in topic: "new and innovative teaching methods" (VI=very interested, NI=not at all interested)



When asked to indicate what they most wanted to know about the educational system, general viewers tended to be interested to very interested in information about what is going on in the school system (GV 2.0) (see Figure 19), information that would help parents deal better with the educational system (GV 1.9) (see Figure 20), and information about how changes in the educational system would effect them personally (GV 2.3). General viewers were slightly interested in information about how other people think about Ontario's educational system (GV 2.6) and information about how to get personally involved in the educational system (GV 2.7).

Figure 19: Average level of interest expressed in becoming more knowledgeable about what is going on in Ontario's educational system (VI=very interested, NI=not at all interested)

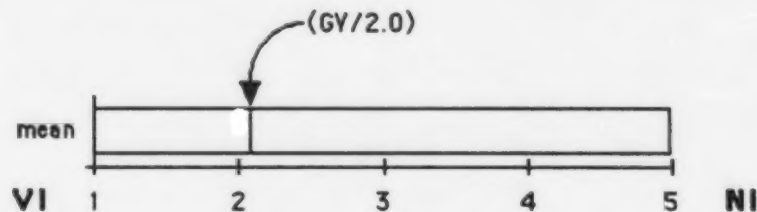
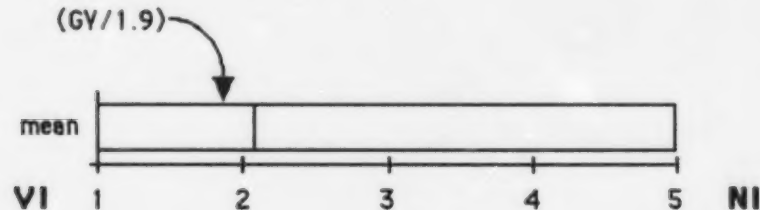


Figure: 20 Average interest expressed in information that would help deal with the educational system better (VI=very interested, NI=not at all interested)



Selected Comments:

"I am concerned about today's students who are unable to read, spell, write, and do basic mathematics without a calculator. Children need to learn how to think without depending on technology and computers to think for them. Without a solid grounding in the basics, children cannot advance to higher levels of learning."

"I am concerned about the costs of education in Ontario. The Ontario government's spending habits are cloaked in secrecy. I believe the Ontario government should be more accountable to Ontario taxpayers about how our tax dollars are being spent."

"Many parents feel very isolated. They don't know what is going on in the schools because of the lack of information. They should be encouraged to find out about what their kids are learning."

D. The Viewer and Public Affairs Programming About Educational Issues

Viewers indicated some strong preferences about the way in which they like to receive information. Viewers tended to rate as most effective program formats that would include documentary footage of actual events (GV1.6/E 1.4) (see Figure 21) and interviews with people who were actually involved in or affected by real events (GV 1.6/E 1.5) (see Figure 22). Viewers felt that programs that relied on interviews with experts (GV 2.2/E 2.1) would be effective. Programs that relied on discussions among experts were rated as somewhat effective (GV 2.3/E 2.6). Viewers were less enthusiastic about program formats that relied on a trained journalist (GV 3.0/E 3.4) (see Figure 23) and a commentary by an expert (GV 2.4/E 2.7) to present information.

Figure 21: Average interest expressed in formats using documentary footage of actual events (VE=very effective, NE=not at all effective)

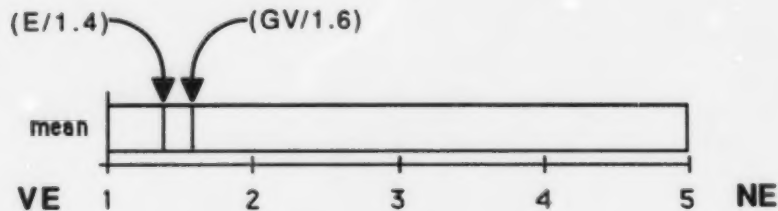


Figure 22: Average interest expressed in formats using interviews with people who are actually involved or affected by real events (VE=very effective, NE=not at all effective)

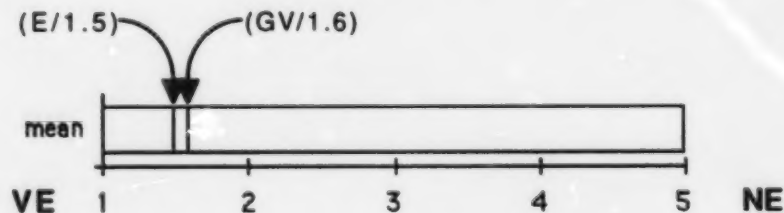


Figure 23: Average interest expressed in formats using a training journalist (VE=very effective, NE=not at all effective)



When asked to select words that best described the characteristics of an ideal host for a program about education issues, viewers selected the word "objective" most often, followed by "probing" and "synthesizing."

E. Implications for Public Affairs Programming in General

Several tentative conclusions about the nature of public affairs programming in general can be drawn from the results of this study.

With regards to program format, viewers tended to express a desire for programming that creates a sense of "first hand" experience. This conclusion comes from viewers' strong preference for the documentary sequences used in *Schools Works* as well as viewers' high ratings of formats utilizing documentary footage and individuals directly involved in real events. Viewers rated as least favorable formats that used trained journalists to present information.

Another characteristic of public affairs programming that viewers appear to value is that of objectivity. Viewers were critical of what they perceived to be an overly positive portrayal of the educational practices presented in *School Works*. They stressed repeatedly that they wanted to hear opposing opinions about the issues raised.

Viewers were also asked to indicate current issues that were of particular concern to them. Generally, viewers had difficulty articulating areas of concern although "the environment" and "the economy" were mentioned most frequently. Given the subject of *School Works*, most viewers returned to concerns related to the educational system. Repeatedly, viewers indicated particular interest in issues that directly affected them or their children.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Future Program Directions

- The evaluation revealed an expressed need on the part of general viewers for programming that informs them about what is going on in the school system. Future programming with the same or similar goals as that of the *School Works* series would seem warranted.
- General viewers have clearly identifiable concerns about the educational system. There is a perception on their part that schools today are not teaching basic skills, are too permissive, and are not spending tax money wisely. These concerns might be addressed in future programming about Ontario's school system that is aimed at general viewers.
- Educators expressed a great need for programming that better informs the public about what they are doing. They strongly believe that many of the concerns expressed by parents about the educational system are unfounded. They believe that TVOntario could play a role in developing this kind of programming.
- Educators suggested that programming options outside of prime time also be explored. For example, programs intended to inform the public about Ontario's schools could be used during parent/teacher meetings or sent home with parents who express interest.
- One educator suggested that the new Daytime Project might be a vehicle for programming intended to bridge the communication gap between educators and the general public.

B. Viewer Preferences About Program Format

- Viewers appear to want to see for themselves what is going on in the classroom. Documentary footage shot in the classroom appears to be a particularly effective way of creating this sense of first hand knowledge.
- Viewers appear to want a balanced presentation. They want to know about what is working in our schools and why. They also want to know about what isn't working and why.

C. Viewer Reactions To School Works

- Viewers were very enthusiastic about the intent of *School Works* and were thrilled to have a glimpse into a modern classroom.
- While educators expressed confusion over the intended audience for the program, most general viewers sensed the program was aimed at people like them.
- Viewers, generally, were left with a positive attitude about the practices portrayed in the program.
- While most viewers described the goal of the program as having something to do with new teaching methods - many admitted they were initially confused about what the program was about. A better introduction and conclusion seemed to be needed.
- The documentary footage was enthusiastically received. Viewers want to get a sense they are seeing things first hand.
- While an attempt was made to tie the panel discussion back to the documentary footage, viewers felt the panel discussion, at times, drifted away from the central theme of the program. Perhaps the panel discussion needed to be more tightly focused and better controlled.
- Viewers noted that basic information about the educational practices portrayed in the program was missing. It was unclear how widespread the practices actually were and how and why these practices were developed. It was also unclear to the viewers how successful the innovations were.
- Viewers, generally, perceived the program to be too one sided. They wanted to hear opposing opinions about the value of the practices shown in the program.
- Viewers, generally, felt the program was too long.

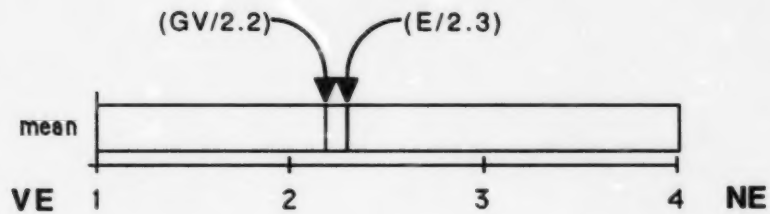
IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A study that more fully assesses general viewers' attitudes, perceptions, and concerns about Ontario's educational system may be helpful in developing program topics. In addition, given the interest of school boards in programming like School Works, a study that identifies ways in which TVOntario and school boards might work together in developing programming about educational issues may also be helpful.

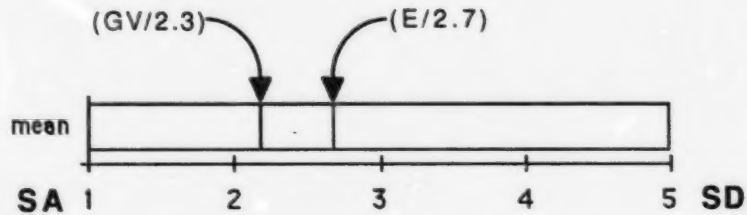
APPENDIX

COMPLETE LISTING OF CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

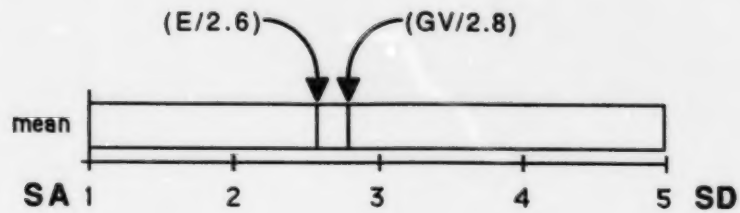
Please note: GV = General Viewers VE = Very effective
E = Educators NE = Not effective



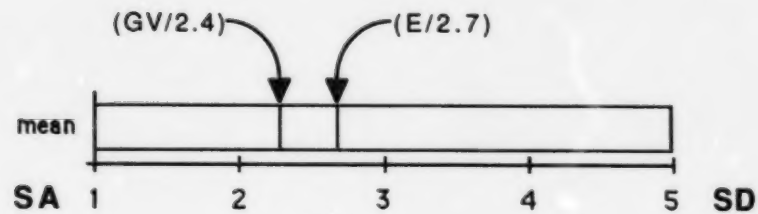
Q2) Overall, how effective was the program?



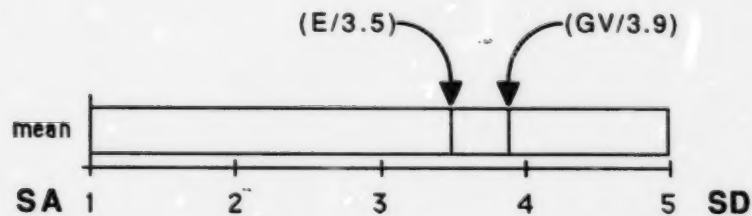
Q3) I found the information presented to be personally valuable.



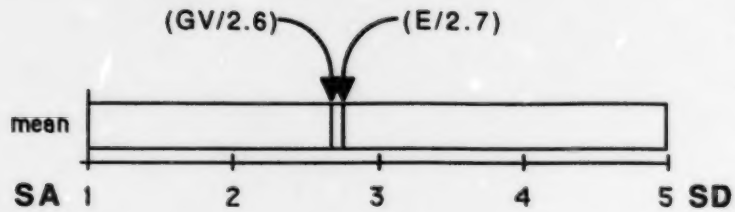
Q4) I felt the program was aimed at a specialized audience.



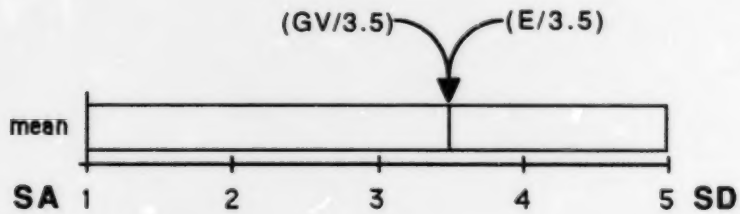
Q5) I found the program easy to follow.



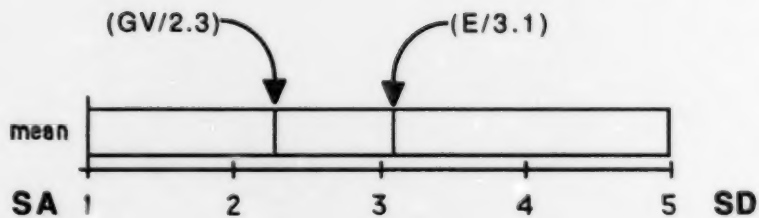
Q7) Overall, I felt the material presented was too complex.



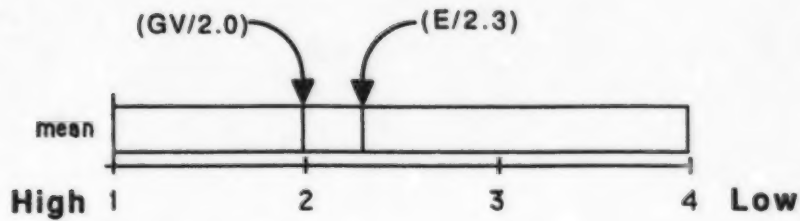
Q8) After having watched the program, I feel encouraged about what's going on in our schools.



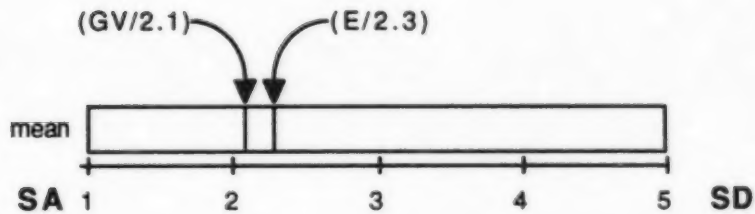
Q9) I felt the program accurately reflects what is going on in the schools.



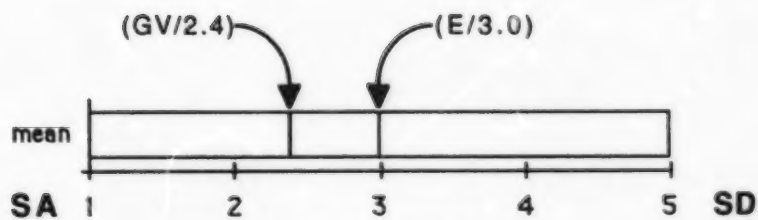
Q10) I found the material presented in the program to be well organized.



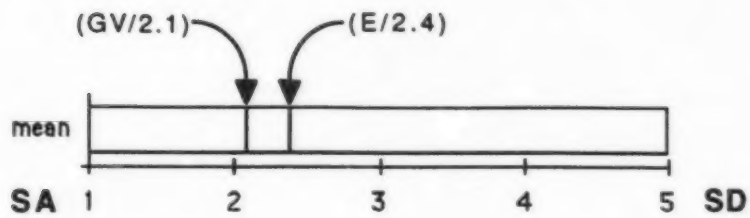
Q13) In general, how would you rate the performance of the host?



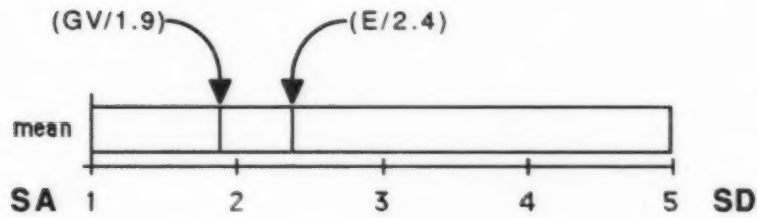
Q14) The host led the panel discussion effectively.



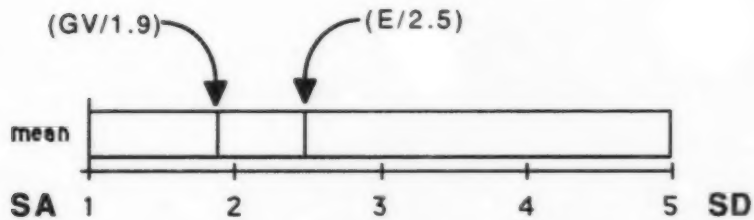
Q15) The host clearly introduced the issues dealt with in the program.



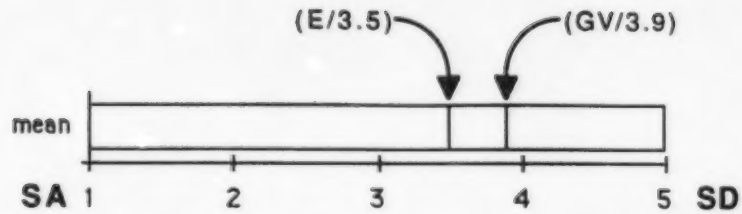
Q16) The host kept the panel discussion focused on the issues at hand.



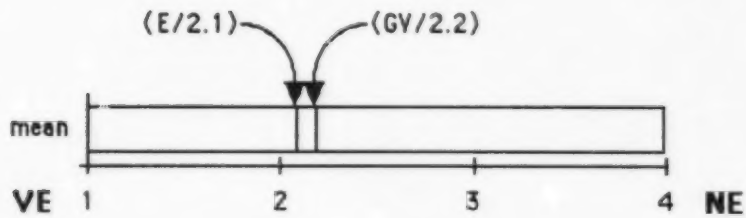
Q17) The questions posed by the host elicited meaningful responses.



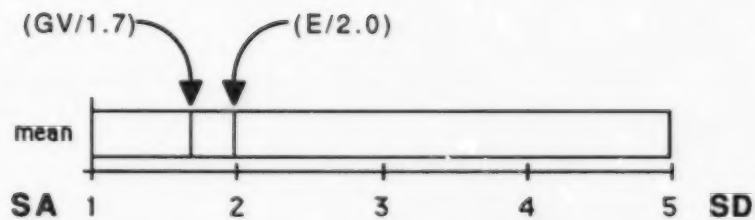
Q18) The host appeared to be knowledgeable about the issues presented.



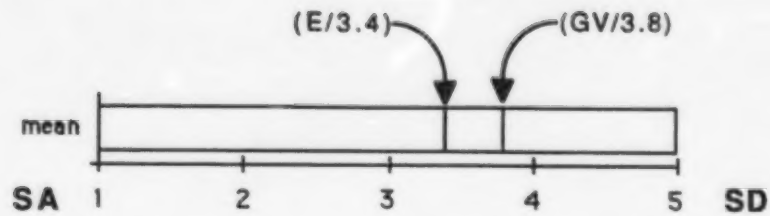
Q19) The questions asked by the host during the panel discussion were difficult to understand.



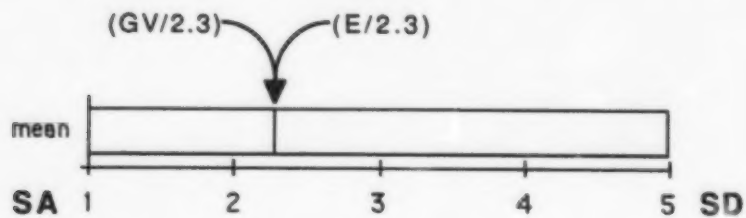
Q20) In general, how effective were the panel discussions.



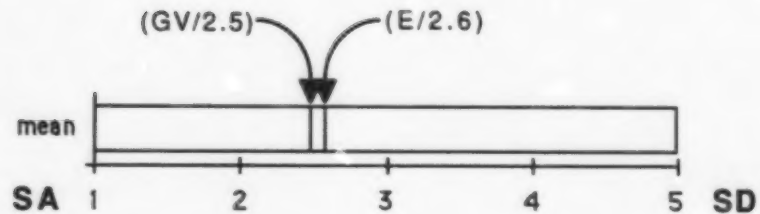
Q21) The panel guests appeared to be knowledgeable about the issues discussed.



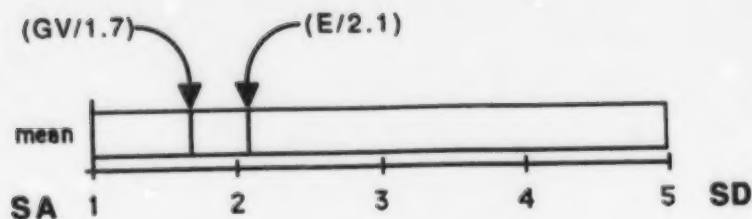
Q22) The panel discussion did not fit in well with the rest of the program.



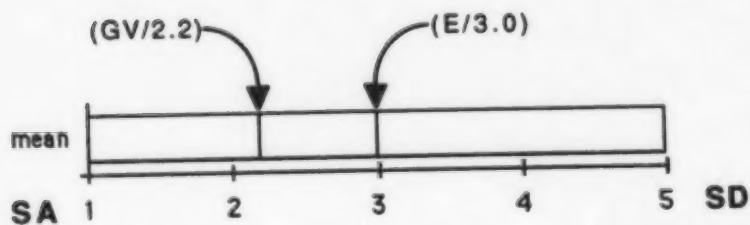
Q23) The identity of panel guests was clearly communicated.



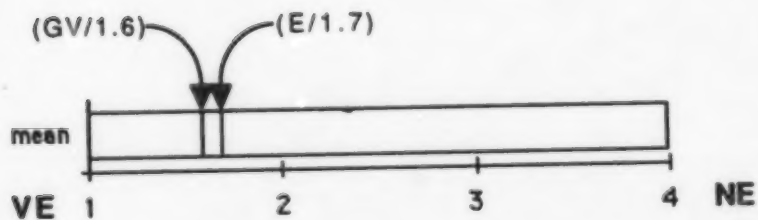
Q24) I understood how each guest was connected with the issue under discussion.



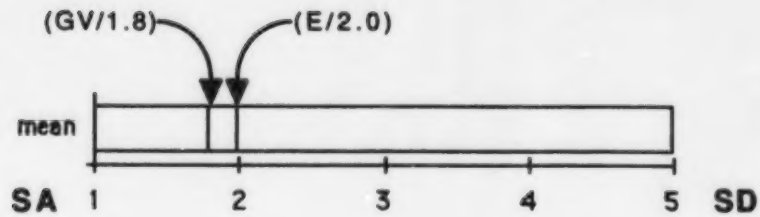
Q25) It was effective to have the panel discussion focus on real events in schools across the province.



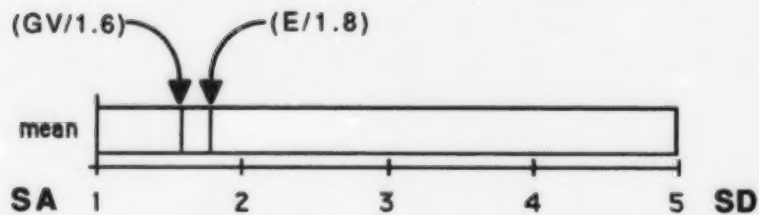
Q26) The panel discussion helped clarify the issues that were raised.



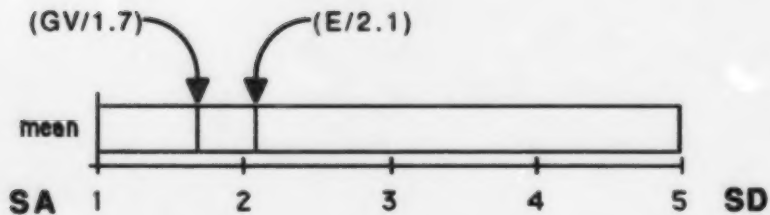
Q28) In general, how effective was the "on location" material?



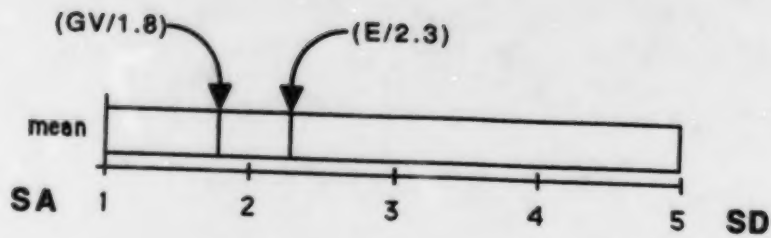
Q29) The "on location" material fitted in well with the rest of the program.



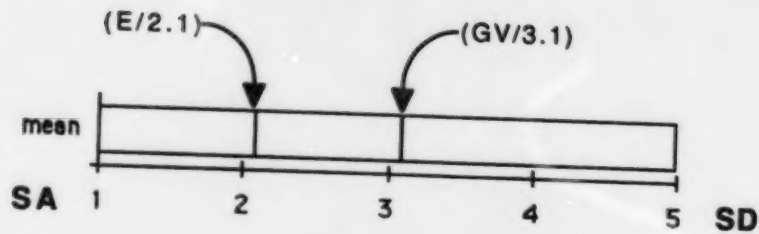
Q30) The "on location" material heightened my interest in the program.



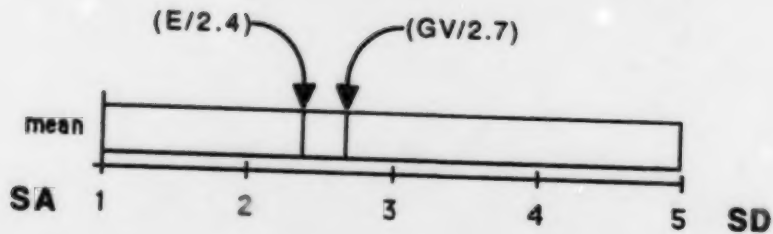
Q31) The "on location" material helped me relate better to the issues presented in the program



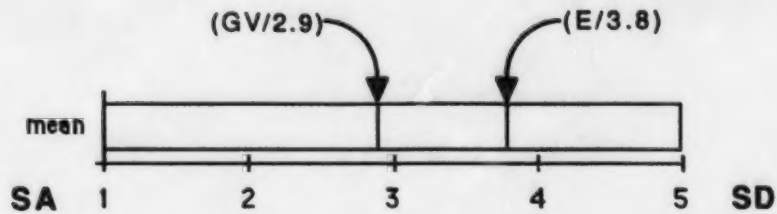
Q32) The "on location" material helped me understand the issues presented in the program.



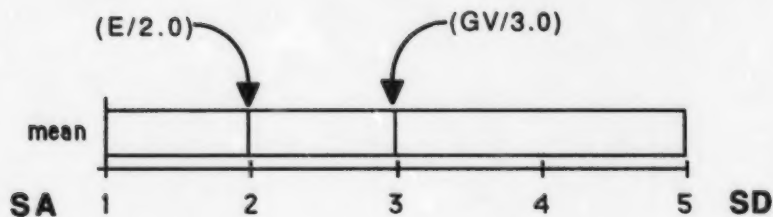
Q36) Students are educated as well as they used to be.



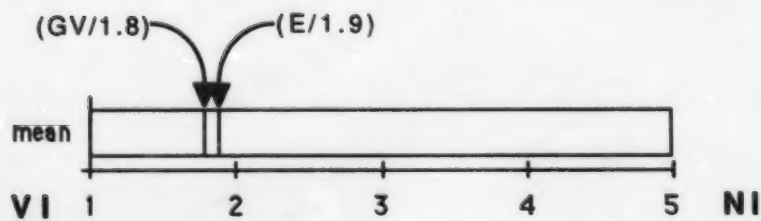
Q37) The school system is sensitive to the concerns of parents.



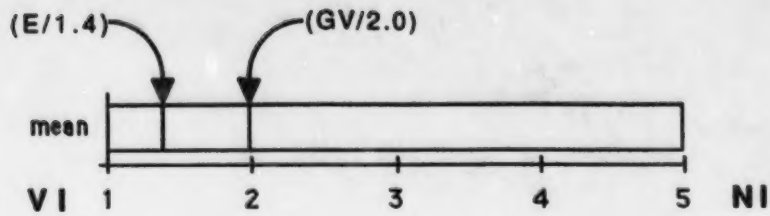
Q38) The school system is not spending our tax money wisely.



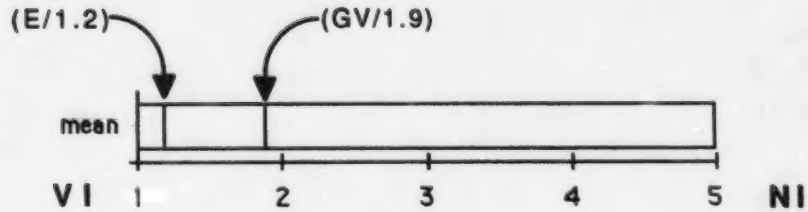
Q39) The right things are not being taught in school.



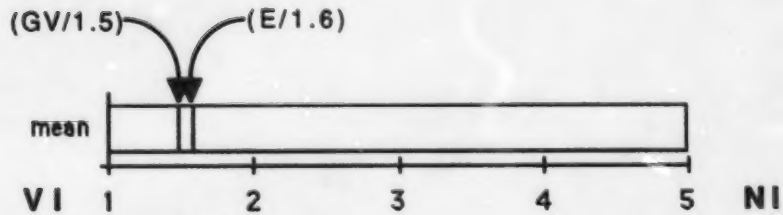
Q40) social problems facing students today such as drug abuse, gang violence, AIDS.



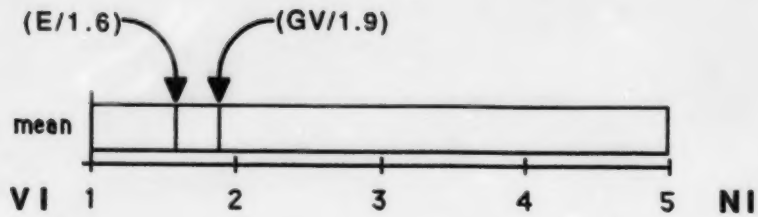
Q41) new and innovative teaching methods.



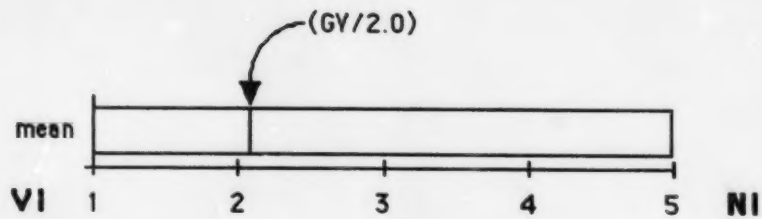
Q42) the mission and direction of schools in the future.



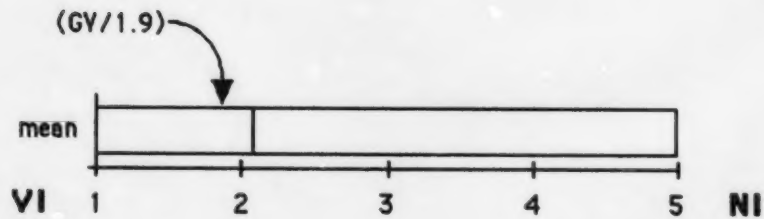
Q43) what students are being taught in school.



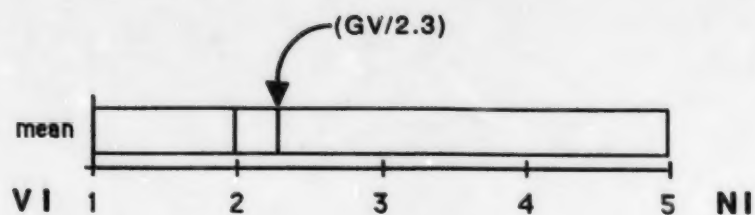
Q44) new approaches to student evaluation.



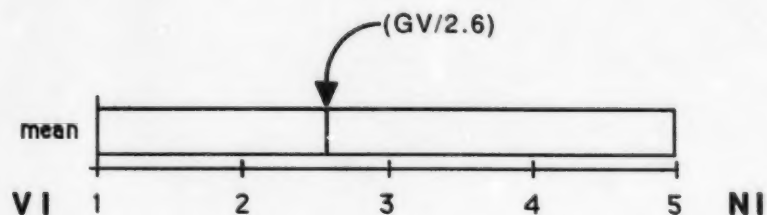
Q46a) to become knowledgeable about what's going on in our schools.



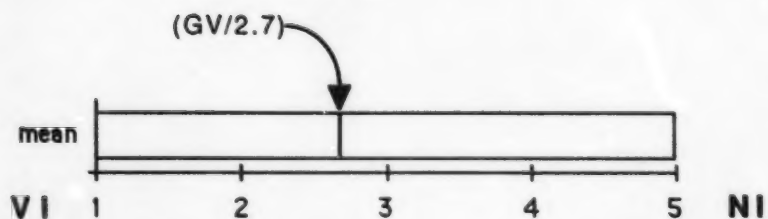
Q46b) to get information that will help me deal better with the educational system.



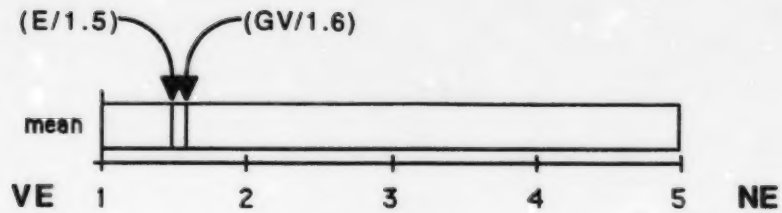
Q46c) to find out how changes in the educational system will affect me personally.



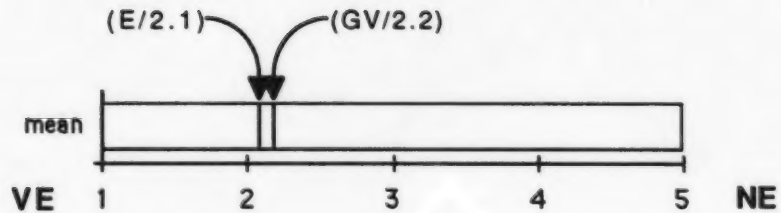
Q46d) to find out about how other people, different from myself, think about Ontario's educational system.



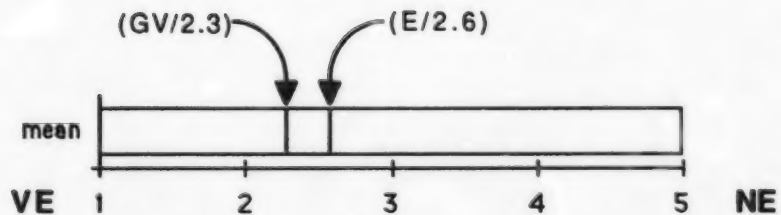
Q46e) to find out how I can get personally involved with the educational system.



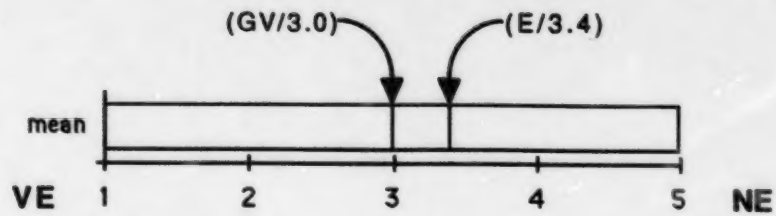
Q48b) from interviews with people who are actually involved or affected by real events



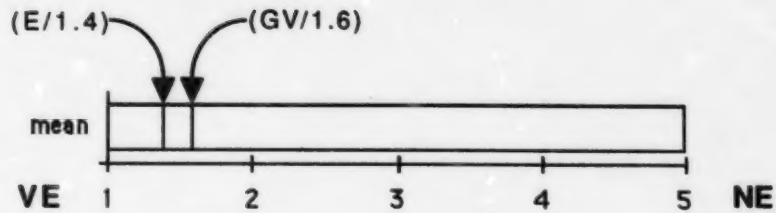
Q48a) from interviews with experts



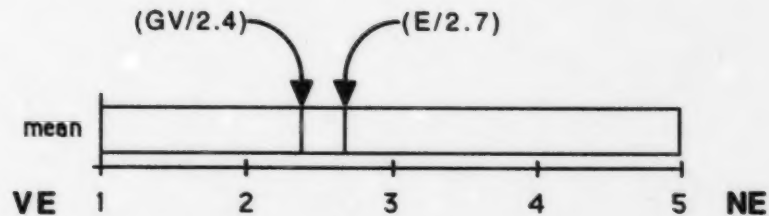
Q48c) from a discussion among experts



Q48d) from a trained journalist



Q48e) from documentary footage of actual events



Q48f) from a commentary by an expert